

## Summary

Pregnancy is a normal process that results in a series of both physiological and psychological changes in women that require adjustment and adaptation on the part of the mother. The most observable result of physiological changes is minor discomforts. The most common discomforts are morning sickness, heart burn, constipation, backache, and leg cramps. Although minor discomforts are non serious, their presence detract from the mother feeling of comfort and well being in many instances they can be avoided by preventive measures or healthful practices once they do occur. Endogenous or traditional practices constitute one type of folk medicine. They are found in almost every household and are given various degrees of importance by mothers. The maternity nurse is in a unique position to assist in prevention and adopting minor discomforts through their health education and counseling, which are very crucial nursing tasks. Understanding of women's practices to their minor discomforts is necessary since pregnant women behave in different ways to control these discomforts. Therefore, this study was done to explore the practices adopted by pregnant women to relieve their common minor discomforts. By revealing these practices, it would be possible to exclude harmful practices and encourage useful ones.

The study was conducted at six maternal and child health centers in El-Mahalla Elkobra and surrounding village (Mahalla Awal, Mahalla Tany, Shobra Babel, Shobra Malkan, Zayad and Abu Ali) MCH centers. A convenient sample of 300 pregnant women was selected from the previously mentioned setting according to the following criteria:

multiparae, free from any obstetrical complications with pregnancy and free from any family history as D.M., hypertension.

An interview schedule was developed by the researcher after reviewing the related literature. It entailed information related to sociodemographic data, obstetrical history, history of ANC follow up and women's practices to relieve minor discomforts.

The content validity of the developed tool was tested by 10 faculty members from faculty of medicine, faculty of nursing university of Alexandria and Tanta.

A pilot study was carried out on 30 women who were, excluded from the study. The aim of the pilot study was to test the validity; the clarity and the time needed to complete the tool.

The interview was conducted individually and in total privacy before and after examination. Collection of data was carried out over a period of three months, starting from the beginning of December 2003 until the end of February 2004. The collected data was then feed to the computer, tabulated, analyzed and presented in descriptive and association form.

**The main findings of the study were:**

***I- Socio demographic data of the study subjects:***

- The age of more than one third of the pregnant women (35.7%) were less than 25 years old, while less than two thirds of them (64.3 % ) were 25 years old or more.

- More than two fifth of women (41.0 %) were illiterate or just read and write, while nearly half of them (48.0 %) had less than university education and only 11.0 % had high education.
- The majority of women (83.7 %) were housewives and 89.0 % had not enough family income.
  - More than two third of women (69.0 %) were living in extended family.
  - Almost two fifth (38.7 %) were married at the age of less than 20 years old.

## ***II- Obstetrical histories of the study subject:***

- More than three fifth of women (61.0 %) had 3 or more pregnancies. More than three quarters of women (83.3 %) had less than 3 deliveries. A large proportion of women (86.7 %) had less than 2 abortions.

## ***III- Utilization of antenatal care (ANC) services during pregnancy:***

- Around than three quarters of women (76.7 %) used ANC services in their previous pregnancy, while all women used ANC in their current pregnancy.
- More than half of women (56.5 %) used ANC services by less than 4 visits.
- Almost three quarters of women (74.4 %) were irregular in their ANC and did not follow their schedule of antenatal visits.

## ***IV- Women's practices to relieve common minor discomforts:***

The majority of women performed harmful practices to relieve minor discomforts, while some of them perform useful ones.

#### **a- Morning Sickness:-**

- Regarding harmful practices: One third of women (33.3 %) ate salty food & pickles, nearly a quarter ( 24.0 %) decreased their fluid intake, 10.0 % took medication without prescription, 6.7 % avoided breakfast & decreased number of meals per day, 4.7 % induced vomiting and 3.3 % drank boiled fenugreek seed.
- Useful practices in form of drinking warm fluid as anise , caraway and funnel was among 13.7 % of women, 13.0 % ate dry cracker & / or plain biscuits with cup of tea or milk before getting from bed, 6.0 % drank peppermints and 4.0 % & 4.0% of them drank boiled ginger and chewed clove or cardamom respectively.

#### **b- Heart burn:-**

- Concerning harmful practices the result of the present study revealed that more than two fifth of women (40.7 %) ate lettuce or green fenugreek, more than one third (36.7 %) took antacid without any prescription, one quarter of them (25.0%) ate crushed bean or lupinus, less than one fifth (18.3 % & 17.3 %) took herbal drinks as fenugreek and drank sodium bicarbonate dissolved in water respectively.
- Regarding useful practices; drinking milk at night was reported by 23.3 % of women, 12.7 % of them took yogurt, 10.3 % avoided greasy, spicy and fried food, 5.0 % avoided sleeping after meal and 4.7 % of women chewed gums after meal.

#### **c- Constipation:-**

- Regarding harmful practices, the results of the present study showed that nearly one quarter of women (24.0 %) used rolled oily paper as anal lubricant, more than one fifth of them (22.3 % & 20.3 %) used

soap as anal lubricant or suppository and were drinking castor oil respectively, (17.3 % & 14.0 %) of them took laxatives without prescription and ate fenugreek seeds respectively, and 8.3 % of them made enema.

- Concerning useful practices 14.3 % of women were eating more fresh vegetable especially chicory and fruits, 11.3 % of them had increased their fluid intake, 5.0 % & 3.3 % took yogurt or milk and anise drinks or caraway respectively.

#### **d- Backache:-**

- Regarding harmful practices the result of the present study revealed that more than one fifth of the women (23.7 %, 22.3 % & 20.3 %) used container of earthenware on back, made alhajamah and cautery for painful area respectively and 17.3 % & 15.0 % of them took analgesic without prescription and drank boiled thyme respectively.
- On the other hand, useful practices were utilized by some of women in the form of lying on their back on firm surfaces was performed by more than fifth ( 22.3 % & 21.7 % ) took frequent period of bed rest, 10.3 % applied binder for their backs, 9.3 % made back rub, 9.0 % drank boiled annona muricata and 6.0 % applied hot foment by camphor oil.

#### **e- Leg cramp:-**

- Concerning harmful practices, the present study results had illustrated that more than one and a quarter of the women (28.3% & 25.0% ) managed leg cramps by applying tight belt and make venous puncture for painful area, while less than one fifth of them (18.7% & 15.0% )

put their affected leg in warm and concentrated salt and took medication without prescription respectively.

- As regard useful practices 10.0% of women massaged their leg, 9.3% of them elevated their leg on pillow, 7.7% of them avoided hard work and long standing, 7.7% increased rich calcium food intake, 5.7% of them made hot fomentations on affected leg and 5.3% made exercises.

***V- Women's sources of information to relieve common minor discomforts and reasons for preference using traditional practices:***

- It was found that a large proportion of women (92.7%) received information about these practices from their mothers, mother-in-law, TBAs, friends and neighbor and herbal traders, while the minority of them (7.3%) took advice from mass media and physicians or nurses
- Regarding the reasons for preferring traditional practices to relieve minor discomforts the results of the present study revealed that more than and nearly quarter of women (25.3% & 24.7%) stated that these practices were recommended by relatives, and no side effect respectively, less than one fifth (18.7% ) of them stated that it is easy to use and can do by themselves, (12.7% & 12.0% ) mentioned that these are cheap & they did not know other methods, (7.7 % & 7.0 % ) of them did not like medical treatment and they believe that these methods give good results, 6.0% of them prefer natural products and 3.3% of them mentioned that these methods are available.
- Significant relationships were found between women's practices to relieve common minor discomforts and their education, occupation, age at marriage, family income, and regular utilization of ANC services.

**Based on the finding of this study it was recommended that:**

- Continuous education and training programs about pregnancy and its accompanied minor discomforts should be conducted for physicians, nurses, midwives and TBAs to manage minor discomforts.
- Health education program for women should be developed to raise their awareness about physiology of pregnancy and useful practices during pregnancy.
- Measures to combat women's irregularity of antenatal flow up visits should be taken.